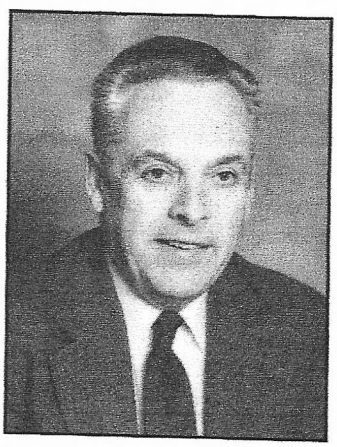
Russell F. Treptow, MMR #187

Russell F. Treptow has had his career and hobby intertwined for over five decades. As a Chicagoan, and his father being an employee of the then-mighty Pennsylvania Railroad, Russell probably came about his interest in railroads naturally. He began by taking pictures in 1935, joined the Railroad Club of Chicago in 1936, took monthly railfan trips from 1937 until their suspension by WWII, and began modeling railroads in 1938 when he purchased his first kit, a O gauge, all-metal tank car kit (he didn't even have a drill at the time!). It marked the beginning of his O gauge period, interrupted by Army service and resumed in 1946 upon his return.

About that time Russell became involved in the NMRA, having become aware of it via an ad in *Model Railroader* (he began reading *MR* in 1939 and has a 53-year collection!). With the NMRA affiliation, he received the *Bulletins* of the era and attended regional and national meets, resulting in his election as Midwest Region president in 1947, serving from 1948 into 1949, despite a move to Washington, D.C., to take a job with the Interstate Commerce Commission. While in D.C., he joined the Mid-Eastern Region, changed from O to HO, and attended meets in Reading, Pa., and Roanoke, Va. The Hotel Roanoke overlooked N&W's terminal operations, and Russell remembers it as a wonderful site for a model railroader's convention.

He returned to the Midwest again in 1951, when he became the general agent for the Ft. Dodge, Des Moines & Southern Railroad, a 90-mile electric line between those cities. He notes that they used to say, "We aren't as long as the Union Pacific, but we're just as wide!" The job included 20 annual passes on all Midwestern lines, an expense account, and being paid to ride trains! Of course all the travel limited his modeling time and only later, when he settled into Kansas City as general traffic manager for H.D. Lee Co., did he become generally active again. At that time he also became acquainted with George Sisk, who was then secretary of the Mid-Continental Region and general agent for the Chicago electric interurban lines.

In the early '60s, the Kansas City Northern club was formed, building layouts in space provided to them gratis. Of course, the free rent did have a price—you received only 30 days notice to vacate when a paying renter was found. The third and final layout was a fully operating and scenicked layout, complete with standard, narrow gauge, and 'juice' (electric) lines.



Narrow gauge was an interest acquired on trips to Colorado in pre-War days developing into HOn3 modeling in the 1960s and the electric railroading reflected his professional experience. Russell recalls that the club thought of the layout as "ours" and "Russell's" since he was the only narrow gauger most of the time. All this became moot after three times when they and the KCN were summarily dispossessed and Russell returned to home layouts.

Russell retired in Kansas City, moved to Atlanta for four years where he joined the Southeast Region and built another basement layout. In 1983 he returned to the Midwest, this time Springfield, Mo., to be near his daughters and their families whose careers had taken them there. Having maintained his MCoR membership, it was only natural that he become involved locally. Springfield is a smaller city but has an active and excellent club in the Ozark Model Railroad Association, a division of the MCoR. They're well known regionally, holding one-day meets that draw from 800 to 1,900 people, as well as TV and newspaper coverage. The OMRA numbers about 30, with several junior members. It also includes six MMRs and several more well on the way to MMR.

At 71, Russell is a senior member of both the NMRA and his local group (other OMRA members affectionately claim that although Russell wasn't around when the wheel was invented, he knew the guy who did it.) He concludes, "It's good to be able to look back over five decades of interest in a single hobby and to realize that regardless of where you are, or how old or how young you are, model railroading is an almost universal hobby now. You will always have good friends and fellow hobbyists whether it goes back a few years or well over 50 years." Russell can't think of a better hobby, but then again he's never had to look for another—when you're in the best, why look at the rest?